

Starr Piano not peanuts in impact on music

In the May *Bulletin*, Bob Szymanski reported the discovery of a cover with an SP/C perfin (S223) and a corner card identifying the user as Starr Piano Company of Richmond, Indiana. The U.S. catalog says the user of this piano was the Star Peanut Company of the same city. We're still not sure whether Mr. Starr maybe had two lines of business or the identifi-

Trayser was in Ripley, Ohio, making pianos. In 1872, prominent Richmond, Indiana, citizens James and Benjamin Starr invested in the firm.

Trayser retired in 1878 and the name of the company was changed to Chase Piano Company when Milo J. Chase joined the firm.

The name was

Gennett label, a division of the Starr Piano Company was an early entrant in the recording of Jazz ensembles.

Somehow or other, says Ratzer, the Gennett label evolved into the Decca recording label. Apparently Decca moved from Richmond to the West Coast about the time of World War II.

In another article in the July/August *Illinois Precancel News*, Earl Ratzer reported on the results of some more research. Here's what he had to say. "Ran across a clipping regarding the Starr Piano-Gennett Records recording complex in Richmond, IN. It apparently was in operation from 1916 to

1934. Among the musicians who made the trek to Richmond to be recorded were Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Biederbecke, Hoagey Carmichael, Tommy Dorsey, Billy Butterfield, and Wingy Manone. Among Manone's recordings was one 'Tar Paper Stomp.' That doesn't ring a bell? Well, the song was rewritten and appeared under a new title—'In The Mood.' That certainly must revive fond memories."



cation in the catalog is just a typographical error.

Nevertheless, music perfin specialist Al Spenser has shared yet another cover with the S223 pattern on it and it confirms the piano side of the story.

Even more interesting information comes from member Earl Ratzer, the precancel-collecting husband of perfiner Helen Ratzer. Writing in the *Illinois Precancel News*, Earl offers some data on the Starr Piano Company.

According to information Earl turned up, an Alsace native named Trayser began making pianos and melodeons in Indianapolis. In 1869,

changed again—to Starr Piano Company—in 1884 when the Starrs acquired controlling interest in the firm.

When James Starr retired, Henry Gennett and Associates acquired control of the company with Benjamin Starr still in charge of production. By 1903, the year Benjamin Starr died, the company was turning out 18,000 pianos a year.

Gennett aggressively expanded the interests of the Starr firm.

Operating under the

